



## A Fitting Address

By James Q. Wilson

*President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney are arguing against critics of the Iraq war who are trying to rewrite history by claiming that the administration misled the country into war. There is some value in this, but it is a fight about the past and not about the future. What most Americans care about is not who is lying but whether we are winning. I offer this speech that the president might use to tell Americans that we are winning.*

My fellow Americans, we are winning, and winning decisively, in Iraq and the Middle East. We defeated Saddam Hussein's army in just a few weeks. None of the disasters that many feared would follow our invasion occurred. Our troops did not have to fight door to door to take Baghdad. The Iraqi oil fields were not set on fire. There was no civil war between the Sunnis and the Shiites. There was no grave humanitarian crisis.

Saddam Hussein was captured and is awaiting trial. His two murderous sons are dead. Most of the leading members of Saddam's regime have been captured or killed. After our easy military victory, we found ourselves inadequately prepared to defeat the terrorist insurgents, but now we are prevailing.

Iraq has held free elections in which millions of people voted. A new, democratic constitution has been adopted that contains an extensive bill of rights. Discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, or politics is banned. Soon the Iraqis will be electing their first parliament.

An independent judiciary exists, almost all public schools are open, every hospital is functioning, and oil sales have increased sharply. In most parts of the country, people move about freely and safely.

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According to surveys, Iraqis are overwhelmingly opposed to the use of violence to achieve political ends, and the great majority believe that their lives will improve in the future. The Iraqi economy is growing very rapidly, much more rapidly than the inflation rate.

### Defeating Terrorism

In some places, the terrorists who lost the war are now fighting back by killing Iraqi civilians. Some brave American soldiers have also been killed, but most of the attacks are directed at decent, honest Iraqis. This is not a civil war; it is terrorism gone mad.

And the terrorists have failed. They could not stop free elections. They could not prevent Iraqi leaders from taking office. They could not close the schools or hospitals. They could not prevent the emergence of a vigorous free press that now involves over 170 newspapers representing every shade of opinion.

Terrorist leaders such as Zarqawi have lost. Most Sunni leaders, whom Zarqawi was hoping to mobilize, have rejected his call to defeat any constitution. The Muslims in his hometown in Jordan have denounced him. Despite his murderous efforts, candidates representing every legitimate point of view and every ethnic background are competing for office in the new Iraqi government.

## What Our Soldiers Have Accomplished

The progress of democracy and reconstruction has occurred faster in Iraq than it did in Germany sixty years ago, even though we have far fewer troops in the Middle East than we had in Germany after Hitler was defeated.

We grieve deeply over every lost American and coalition soldier, but we also recognize what those deaths have accomplished. A nation the size of California, with 25 million inhabitants, has been freed from tyranny, equipped with a new democratic constitution, and provided with a growing new infrastructure that will help every Iraqi and not just the privileged members of a brutal regime. For every American soldier who died, 12,000 Iraqi voters were made into effective citizens.

Virtually every American soldier who writes home or comes back to visit his or her family tells the same story: we have won, Iraqis have won, and life in most of Iraq goes on without violence and with obvious affection between the Iraqi people and our troops. These soldiers have not just restored order in most places, they have built schools, aided businesses, distributed aid, and made friends.

To take their places, Iraq has trained, with American and NATO assistance, tens of thousands of new troops and police officers. In the last election, there were more Iraqi soldiers than American ones guarding the polling places.

## Progress in the Greater Middle East

We know that much remains to be done. Sunni and Shiite leaders must work together more closely. We know that for centuries Sunni leaders, including Saddam, ruled Iraq even though the Sunnis are only a minority of its population. The terrorists began by killing Shiites but now have killed Sunnis as well, all without the slightest

moral justification. But we know from America's own experience that when different groups work together constructively, they learn to trust one another. That must happen, and will happen, in Iraq.

Our success is not confined to Iraq. Libya has renounced its search for nuclear weapons. Syria has

pulled out of Lebanon. Afghanistan has produced a democratic government and economic progress for its people. Egypt has had the beginnings of a democratic vote. In an area once dominated by dictatorships, the few remaining ones are either changing or worrying deeply about those that have changed.

We know now that some of our information about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was wrong. But we also know now what we have always believed: that Saddam Hussein, who had already invaded both Iran and Kuwait, had the money, authority, and determination to build up his stock of such weapons. When he did, he would have become the colossus of the Middle East, able to overwhelm other countries and rain rockets down on Israel.

We have created a balance of power in the Middle East in which no regime can easily threaten any other. In doing this,

we and our allies have followed a long tradition: we worked to prevent Imperial Germany from dominating Europe in 1914, Hitler from doing the same in 1940, and the Soviet Union from doing this in 1945. Now we are doing it in the Middle East.

And we are winning. Soon Iraqi forces will be able to maintain order in the few hot spots that still exist in Iraq. We will stay the course until they are ready. We made no mistake ending Saddam's rule. We have brought not only freedom to Iraq, but progress to most of the Middle East. America should be proud of what it has accomplished. America will not cut and run until the Iraqis can manage their own security, and that will happen soon.

Thank you, and God bless you.

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